

Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 GUATEM 00718 041834Z

41

ACTION FDRE-00

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00

CCO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 IGA-02 OMB-01

TRSE-00 HEW-06 AGR-10 IO-11 SCSE-00 SCA-01 PER-03

DHA-02 OPR-02 A-01 SY-05 OC-05 FEAE-00 HUD-02 EB-07

FAA-00 DOTE-00 /115 W

----- 048844

O 041620Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9885

UNCLAS GUATEMALA 0718

AID/PHA/FDRC

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: SWEL, GT

SUBJ: EARTHQUAKE: PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

REQUEST DEPARTMENT PASS IMMEDIATE TO: MANAGUA, MEXICO
SAN JOSE, SAN SALVADOR, TEGUCIGALPA AND CINCSOUTH

SUMMARY

THE EARLY MORNING FEBRUARY 4 EARTHQUAKE HAS CAUSED SERIOUS
PROPERTY DAMAGE IN GUATEMALA CITY, PARTICULARLY IN THE LOWER
CLASS RESIDENTIAL PARTS OF THE CITY. ESTIMATES OF PERSONAL
INJURIES AND DEATHS ARE STILL SKETCHY, BUT IT IS CLEAR
THAT THERE HAVE BEEN MANY PEOPLE INJURED. PRINCIPAL
PROBLEM FOR NEXT FEW DAY OR SO WILL PROBABLY BE SHORTAGE OF
MEDICAL FACILITIES AND LACK OF POWER AND WATER BUT, OVER
THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS, HOMELESSNESS SHOULD BE MOST SERIOUS.

1. PRESIDENT LAUGERUD HAS SURVEYED GUATEMALA FROM THE
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 GUATEM 00718 041834Z

AIR AND USMILGP OFFICER SPOKE WITH HIM AT 9:40 A.M. WHEN

HIS HELICOPTER LANDED. PRESIDENT SAID THERE HAD BEEN VERY EXTENSIVE DAMAGE TO HOMES AND MANY INJURIES IN THE POORER RESIDENTIAL AREAS OF ZONES 18, 6, 2, 7, AND O. ASKED IF HE COULD ESTIMATE CASUALTIES, PRESIDENT SAID HE WOULD GUESS THERE WERE ON THE ORDER OF 3,000 INJURED. ALL HOSPITALS AND EMERGENCY HOSPITALS ARE FULL, PRESIDENT SAID, AND HE ASKED FOR US ASSISTANCE (SEPTEL).

2. PRESIDENT SAID ELECTRICITY IS OFF THROUGHOUT THE CITY AND WILL NOT BE TURNED BACK ON UNTIL GOG IS SURE IT IS SAFE TO DO SO. WATER SUPPLY IS NON-EXISTENT DUE TO MANY BROKEN PIPES AND IT IS UNKNOWN HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE TO RESTORE IT. SHORTAGE OF DRINKING WATER FOR THIS CITY OF 900,000 PEOPLE MAY THEREFORE BE GREATEST NEED, PRESIDENT SAID.

3. FOLLOWING ARE RESULTS OF PRELIMINARY SURVEYS OF DAMAGE BY EMBOFFS: GUATEMALA CITY AIRPORT TERMINAL BUILDING HAS SUFFERED CONSIDERABLE SUPERFICIAL BUT NOT APPARENT STRUCTURAL DAMAGE. (ONE OFFICIAL GUESSED REPAIR COST AT ONE MILLION DOLLARS) BUT LANDING STRIPS ARE UNDAMAGED AND ALL PANAM FLIGHTS, INCLUDING 747'S ARE LANDING AND TAKING OFF NORMALLY.

4. BUILDINGS IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA (ZONE 1) APPEAR TO HAVE SUFFERED LITTLE EXTERIOR DAMAGE BUT THE EXTENT OF STRUCTURAL DAMAGE COULD NOT BE DETERMINED BY EMBOFFS WHO VISITED THE AREA. A NUMBER OF PLATE-GLASS WINDOWS IN DOWNTOWN STORES HAVE BEEN SMASHED BUT THERE WERE NO SIGNS OF LOOTING. MOST BUSINESSES IN DOWNTOWN AREA WERE STILL CLOSED BUT TRAFFIC WAS MOVING THROUGH THE AREA AT ONLY SLIGHTLY LESS THAN NORMAL VOLUME.

5. EMBOFF VISITED ONE HOTEL IN DOWNTOWN AREA. ALL AMERICAN CITIZENS AT HOTEL HAD ESCAPED UNHARMED AND ALL WERE ADVISED TO REMAIN AT THE HOTEL AND NOT GO IMMEDIATELY TO THE AIRPORT. AT LEAST THREE PEOPLE WERE KILLED IN A BUILDING ACROSS FROM RITZ HOTEL WHEN ONE OF INTERIOR WALLS COLLAPSED. AS FAR AS EMBOFF COULD DETERMINE, THAT WAS THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT IN ALL OF DOWNTOWN. HOTEL CONQUISTADOR SHERATON, ZONE 4, IS OPEN AND IN GOOD CONDITION. HOTEL BILTMORE-CAMINO REAL, ZONE 10, SUFFERED EXTENSIVE DAMAGE. CAMINO REAL WILL PROBABLY BE CLOSED FOR SEVERAL WEEKS. BILTMORE WILL TRY TO REMAIN OPEN

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 GUATEM 00718 041834Z

AT LEAST FOR TONIGHT. THERE ARE NO KNOWN INJURIES TO AMERICANS AT ANY OF THESE HOTELS.

"9 DOWNTOWN AREA HAS NO ELECTRIC POWER OR WATER. TRAFFIC WAS BEING DIRECTED IN PLACES BY NATIONAL POLICE OR BY ARMY TROOPS.

7. THE AREAS THAT APPEAR HAREST HIT ARE RESIDENTIAL ZONES

5 AND 3, WHICH FLANK ZONE 1 AND ZONE 12. IN ZONE 5, EMBOFF'S PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE IS THAT A FIFTH TO A THIRD OF THE HOUSES SUFFERED SERIOUS EXTERNAL DAMAGE. WALLS, MOST OF THEM MADE OF ADOBE, HAD COLLAPSED INTO THE STREETS. THERE WERE SEVERAL BLOCKS WHERE THE COMMON EXTERIOR WALL OF A NUMBER OF HOUSES HAD COLLAPSED ALL AT ONCE.

8. HOUSES IN ZONE 3 APPEARED HARDER HIT THAN THOSE IN ZONE 5. EMBOFF'S PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE IS THAT A THIRD OF THE HOMES IN ZONE 3 SUFFERED SERP7 3/5ERNAL DAMAGE. THERE, AGAIN, OST HOUSES CONSTRUCTED OF ABODE AND WALLS HAD COLLAPSED OUTWARD. IN SOME AREAS OF ZONE 12, ABOUT A THIRD OF THE HOUSES HAVE BEEN DAMAGED WITH MANY COLLAPSED WALLS.

9. IN BOTH ZONES 5 AND 3 AND PARTS OF ZONE 12, THE PEOPLE WERE ALL CAMPING AND COOKING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREET. LITTLE ORGANIZED EFFORT BEING MADE YET TO CLEAR AWAY THE RUBBLE OR SHORE UP WALLS WHICH HAD SUFFERED MAJOR CRACKS.

10. ESTIMATES OF PERSONAL INJURIES AND DEATHS WERE BEING BROADCAST BY RADIO(15), BUT THERE WAS TOO LITTLE INFORMATION AVAILABLE FOR THESE SKETCH REPORTS TO BE RELIABLE-ONLY A COUPLE OF RADIO STATIONS WERE ON THE AIR SIX HOURS AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE. DAMAGE IN THE CITY IS TOO WISESPREAD, HOWEVER, FOR THERE NOT TO HAVE BEEN SOME PEOPLE KILLED. FORTUNATELY, HOWEVER, THE EARTHQUAKE APPEARS TO HAVE PRODUCED NO MAJOR LANDSLIDES IN THE BARRANCAS, AT LEAST ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE CITY.

1. DURING THE NEXT DAY OR SO, THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEM, IN ADIITION TO STRAIN ON MEDICAL FACILITES, WILL BE LACK OF POWER AND WATER. THER MAY ALSO BE A LACK OF GASOLINE. EMBOFF NOTICED THAT THERE WAS A RUN ON JUST ABOUT EVERY UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 GUATEM 00718 041834Z

GASOLINE STATION IN THE AREA. GASOLINE BEING PUMPED BY HAND DUE TO LACK OF POWER. DEPLOYMENT OF ARMY TROOPS IS LIKELY TO HOLD DOWN THE AMOUNT OF LOOTING, BUT HOARDING AND SPECULATION WILL PROBABLY CAUSE DIFFICULTIES IN THE LOWER CLASS REGIONS.

12. OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS, THE MAIN PROBLEM IS LIKELY TO BE HOMELESSNESS BECAUSE IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME FOR THE DESTROYED HOMES TO BE REPAIRED.

13. PANAM REPORTS SEATS AVAILABLE ON ALL BUT ONE FLIGHT OUT OF THE CITY. THERE HAS ONLY BEEN A SLIGHT INCREASE IN DEMAND FOR SEATS.
ANDREWSS

UNCLASSIFIED

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NATURAL DISASTERS, EARTHQUAKES, DISASTER REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976GUATEM00718
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760042-0748
From: GUATEMALA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760284/aaaacvtv.tel
Line Count: 167
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION FDRE
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: blochd0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 JUN 2004 by BrownAM>; APPROVED <03 DEC 2004 by blochd0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EARTHQUAKE: PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENT REQUEST DEPARTMENT PASS IMMEDIATE TO: MANAGUA, MEXICO
TAGS: SWEL, GT
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006